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CAVALRY JACK IN THE SWAMPS.

By Col. Ralph Fenton,

Author of "Cavalry Jack at Shiloh," "Cavalry Jack at Corinth," "Cavalry Jack at Murfreesboro'," "Cavalry Jack at Champion Hill," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONDITION OF THE ARMY AT VICKSBURG.

AFTER the battle of Champion Hill, the Union army around Vicksburg—the rebel Gibraltar—began a more complete investment of the place. The army, it must be remembered, was in an enemy's country, and, if there were rebels in the earth-works, there were also rebels outside of them.

It seemed that a soldier could scarcely step outside the lines that the crack of a rifle did not ring out from the woods, and he fell, pierced by the bullet of some rebel guerrilla.

It was thought by some, that, after the capture of Grand Gulf, Port Gibson, Jackson and Champion Hill, that Vicksburg would then surrender without a struggle, but the mistake was soon found out. The rebels just as hotly contested every inch of ground in front, and clouds of blood-thirsty guerrillas swarmed in their rear.

Guerrillas on horseback, on foot, singly, in dozens and by regiments flocked about the rear, and, when a stand was made against them, fled, disappearing in the forests and swamps, which seemed to afford them a most admirable retreat.

Our brave soldiers were shot down on picket in the night, in the day-time, and even at their meals, not by hundreds but by thousands.

The small garrisons left at Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, Champion Hill and Jackson were hourly in danger of annihilation.

Those swamp guerrillas even lay along the banks of the river, concealed in the woods, and watched iron-clad steamers as they went up and down the river. When a gunner showed his face at an open port there was a little white spurt of smoke from the river-bank, followed by the distant crack of a rifle, and the soldier fell, either dead or badly wounded at his gun.

These constant annoyances greatly retarded the movements of the army, and was a constant worry to those in the rear. The weary soldier had scarcely laid down to rest before there came the long roll of the drum, and

the awful cry to fall in. Instantly every man was in line. Then, perhaps, would follow miles of silent marching and counter-marching, which would not end until daylight. The whole night, which should have been spent in sleep, was passed in useless movements through the woods, and the entire alarm, caused, no doubt, by no larger body than a dozen guerrillas.

Generals Logan and Sherman advised the commander-in-chief to send some one out to raid against these guerrillas, to strike terror to their hearts by penetrating their homes and country, and thus call them away from harassing our soldiers.

On the 17th day of April, Colonel, afterwards General Grierson, started out with a considerable force, and effected a considerable relief for the army.

But as he returned the rebel guerrilla hosts flocked in his rear, and fire and blood and death washed every mile of the road. There was less danger in the front where those heavy cannon were making the earth quake, than there was in the rear where the unerring rifle of the guerrilla sharp-shooter was constantly cracking with awful significance.

"General Sherman," said General Logan, or "Black John," as he was more familiarly known, entering the tent of the latter general. "We have got to do something with those infernal guerrillas."

"Well, general, what would you suggest?"

"Kill them."

"But they seem to have serious objections to that."

"Yes, the cowardly hounds start for the swamps as soon as they hear the order to fall in, and once there, nothing short of an alligator or blood-hound can find them."

"I suppose, general, you are annoyed more than any other division?"

"I think I am. To think that a whole division should be kept constantly annoyed by a lot of guerrillas, perhaps not exceeding a dozen."

"A dozen," said Sherman, with a smile.

"I believe at times there are not more than a dozen."

"Then why not send out a dozen of your best cavalrymen and take them in?"

"That is a good idea, general, and I have been thinking very seriously about it," Logan answered. "I can't afford to have my division constantly harassed by these swampers."

"Do you mean, general, that there is only a dozen of them?"

"No, there are thousands, but they go in small parties, and have long reliefs. I think that I have had a battalion called out a score of times to fight ten or a dozen of these wretches."

"Well, general, that's bad."

"We can't always tell whether there are a dozen or a thousand. A company of cavalry was out on picket and when the firing commenced, supposed it was only a small squad of these guerrillas. They remained quiet until a thousand had them surrounded. But four out of the company was enabled to cut their way through, and one has since died of his wounds. You see I am bound to be annoyed by the rascals, for there is no judging how many there may be of them."

"It's a bad state of affairs," said General Sherman.

At this moment a cavalry officer came up to the tent and inquired for General Logan. He was admitted, and after two military salutes said to Logan:

"General, another picket post has all been killed or driven in by the guerrillas."

"Lieutenant Benson, I believe," said the general.

"Yes, sir."

"Was it your post?"

"Yes, sir."

"How many were the guerrillas, lieutenant?"

"I don't think they could have exceeded a dozen."

"It's an outrage," cried General Logan. "I wish I knew how to get out of the dilemma."

The lieutenant had several bullet holes in his hat, and one or two through his clothes.

He had a shot through the fleshy part of the left arm, and the blood had flowed down his arm to his finger tips.

"Lieutenant, you had better go to the surgeon and have your wound dressed, I will put some one on the track of those guerrillas."

The lieutenant again saluted with his sound arm, and departed. For a moment General Logan's head was bowed in thought, and he said:

"General Sherman, I've a mind to send a man among those infernal guerrillas, who, I think will subdue them!"

"Who?"

"A young fellow well known throughout the army as Cavalry Jack."

"Cavalry Jack. I seem to have heard the name before."

"No doubt of it. He was old Ben Prentiss' scout at Shiloh."

"Oh, yes, I remember him now, I was stationed close to the brave old General Prentiss on that fatal day."

"This fellow was Halleck's spy at Corinth, and under Rosecrans at Murphreesboro, and I had him with me before our little scrape with Pemberton at Champion Hill."

"He seems to have had considerable experience?"

"He has, and has always been found true as steel."

"He must be an old and experienced scout?"

"On the contrary, general, he is but little more than a boy."

"A boy?"

"Yes, a mere boy, but war seems adapted to some natures and his is one. This young fellow is a stranger to fear, and possesses those keen perceptions so essential to a scout."

"I think, general, that the sooner you have him engaged in hunting these guerrillas, the better it will be for your army," said Sherman.

"I will send for him at once."

"I would without fail."

General Logan sent an orderly to Jack's regiment, and soon this veteran appeared before both the generals.

He saluted them, and was invited to a seat on a campstool.

"Well, Jack," said General Logan, "you have had a few days' rest, have you not?"

"Yes, general."

"Are you ready for some vigorous work?"

"I am, general."

"Always ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think that perhaps you have never been engaged in as perilous an enterprise as this, and I only ask if you will do it. I do not intend to force you into engaging in so hazardous an undertaking."

"What is its nature, general?"

"To scout among the guerrillas who hover in our rear, and drive them to the swamps," said General Logan.

For some time the young cavalryman sat in his chair looking down upon the ground.

"What do you think of the enterprise, Jack?" asked General Logan.

"I think it a very good idea."

"Will you undertake it?"

"I will undertake to try, but of course, general, I cannot guarantee success. There are so many things which might happen to drive success away from me."

"I know all that, Jack," said General Logan. "What I meant was, will you volunteer in this dangerous undertaking?"

"Yes, sir."

"You can have as many men as you want. I think, however, that twenty will be quite enough."

"I would prefer a dozen, no more, general," said Jack.

"All right, Jack, you shall have a dozen, and may choose from my whole army if you wish to. Anything below a major."

"I would rather name the men from my own company," said Jack. "I know them all well, and know they can be depended upon. They need not be drafted or detailed into this service, for they will volunteer."

"You shall have your own selection, sir, and I think your preferring men from your own company very wise. You know them, and they know you."

CHAPTER II.

CAVALRY JACK SENT OUT.

WITH a piece of paper and a pencil Jack wrote the names of the twelve men he wanted.

They were Ben Moore, Tom Bragg, John Flynn, Philo Slyter, Celeste Chamberlain, Adelbert Chapman, Boss Evans, Squire Skaggs, Eph Murry, Jim Jenkins, Dick Beddington, and Charley Hill. Jack knew full well that twelve more suitable men for such a hazardous undertaking could not be found anywhere, and that they would go with him to death's door if necessary.

"You know all these men?" said the general, when he had seen the list.

"I know them well."

"They can stand fire?"

"Yes, like men of iron."

"Then they will do."

"I want every one to volunteer," said Jack. "As a service of this kind, general, I would prefer that every man was a volunteer rather than be detailed for such service."

"You are right. See them yourself," said the general, "and make what arrangements you think best."

Jack bowed his thanks, saluted both generals once more, and turned and left the tent.

Hurrying to his own quarters, which were not far off, he began to search for his men. The first he found was Dick Beddington.

Dick was a tall, red-haired, freckle-faced man, with a large blue eye, bold and daring. He was perhaps one of the boldest, most daring of any cavalryman in the Union army. Though he had many equals he had no superior.

"Dick, I want you to go with me," said Jack, "that is if you will, mind you, you are not forced to go. You are by no means compelled. You must volunteer."

Dick laughed, expectorated a great quantity of tobacco juice, and said he was ready to go with Jack to a place generally supposed to be warmed up to a white heat by fire and brimstone.

Jack next found Charley Hill, who was almost the opposite of Dick. Charley was thick-set, with black eyes and hair, and dark skin. He said he was very anxious to set out.

"When are we going?" said he.

"To-night."

"Good, count me in."

"I must see the other boys I want."

"Who are they?"

Jack then read the list.

"They'll all go and jump at the chance, you bet you," said Charley.

"And they are boys that can be depended on in a tight place," said Dick Beddington.

There was no doubt of that, Jack knew full well.

They then began to look up the other ten.

Four were found under a tree playing seven up for a revolver they had taken from a rebel officer.

When Jack announced what he wanted of them they at once declared their readiness to go. Then all turned out to hunt up the other six.

Two were found asleep, three grooming their horses, and the last, who was Philo Slyter, was found trying to steal some whisky from the tent of an infantry captain.

Philo, notwithstanding his propensity to pilfer, was brave as a lion, and asked nothing better than a gallop through the enemy's country.

"Come on as quick as ye like, cap'en," he said, with a grin, and rolling his one eye about, "I am ready to go with ye to the jumpin'-off place and jump off arter ye."

Jack smiled, and said he hoped they would not get that far.

The twelve were mustered, and then their young leader told them to report at six that evening with forty rounds and three days' rations.

"Remember, boys," he said, "we are going to the rear, which is far more dangerous than the front. We will be under fire the whole time we are out."

"We all know that," said Ben Moore.

"We are prepared," said Celeste Chamberlain. "Our wills are made and lives insured."

This caused a laugh as though it was a light matter.

"Be sure and have your guns in the very best condition, and every man must have at least two revolvers."

The men dispersed, and then at the appointed time the men, all mounted on their horses, appeared at the appointed place ready to depart.

"What will we do for horse feed," said Boss Evans.

"We must forage for that."

"Well, we are capable of doing that, and no mistake," said Adelbert Chapman. "Squire Skaggs is the proper man to do it."

Skaggs, who, by the way, was what is known as an army thief, looked on his comrades from a pair of lowering eyebrows. Not that Skaggs cared so much for the insinuation against his honesty, but that he was naturally a sullen kind of a fellow. He had no pride of honesty, and, in fact, if he had any pride at all, it was the pride that he was a thief. He seemed to like to be thought the most successful thief in the army. But Skaggs was as brave a man as ever drew a sword, and never broke the unwritten army law by stealing from one of his own company.

Companies A, B, C and D he plundered to his heart's content, but Company E he was careful not to molest in any way.

Cavalry Jack had made all necessary arrangements for the scout, and Captain Gray, with the entire company, turned out to see the brave boys off. There was a shout as they left, and a waving of hats as the twelve galloped away.

They rode directly out of the camp, galloped over a hill, and passed their pickets.

"Helloa, boys, where ye goin'?" cried the picket, hailing them as they went.

"Going to hunt out those swamp alligators."

"Good, good, hope ye'll clean 'em out."

"Have they been annoying you, sergeant?" asked Jack.

"Not for the last hour," said the sergeant, who was with the pickets at the post. "About an hour ago they came near enough to kill one of our men."

Jack could see the martyr to his country's cause lying but a few paces away on an old horse blanket. Near his side were two of his late comrades playing cards.

Such is the utter contempt with which soldiers come to regard death, that they laugh it in the face.

"Well, boys, we hope to avenge the death of your comrade," said Jack.

"I hope ye will," the sergeant answered. "Ye'd better

look sharp, 'cos the very woods is full o' them bush-whackers, an' they kin knock a feller a thunderin' long ways."

"I know by past experience that they shoot straight," Jack returned, "but we have marksmen with us, and we are not afraid if we have anything at all like an equal show. Good-day, boys."

"Good-bye, and luck to ye."

Then Jack and his comrades galloped on, and in twenty minutes were in the guerrilla's country.

CHAPTER III.

FEEDING HORSES UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

ALTHOUGH the small party of scouts which we have seen ride out into the enemy's country, surrounded by danger on every hand, were all the most daring fellows in the Union army, they were by no means reckless.

They kept their eyes open, and every sight and sound in that great old forest caught their notice. Daring without caution is nothing but the utmost folly. Those who dash ahead reckless of all consequences, are sure in the end to come to grief.

The road upon which Cavalry Jack and his squad were traveling led in the direction of Black River. They were to cross by means of some flats kept at a point held by the Union forces.

The woods on either side of the road were very dense, making an immense forest of giant trees.

"I think," said Jack, "we will have no trouble until we cross Big Black River."

"By thunder," cried Dick Beddington, "you do not intend to cross Black River, do you?"

"To be sure."

"Well, then there will be more fun than I at first anticipated."

"You are not afraid to cross Black River, are you Dick?" said Jack.

"Afraid. No, I reckon not."

"I thought you were not."

"We're going to burn powder, and try the mettle o' our horses though afore we git back, or I'm very much mistaken."

"I think so, myself, but we boys are used to that business. It need not give us any uneasiness."

"No, I'm not scared," said Dick.

"Nor I," said Ben Moore.

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

"Nor I," declared they, one by one, until the entire dozen had expressed themselves.

When they reached Black River they found the boats ready to conduct them across it. They were soon on the other side.

"Now, d'ye be keerful, or ye'll never come back," said the ferry-man. "The facts is, we are shot at almost every hour by some one o' them fellers."

"Do they git ye often?" asked John Flynn, a sharp visaged squint-eyed fellow of about thirty.

"Yes, they git one or two o' our boys a'most every day."

"They are savage——"

"Crack!"

A sharp report cut off the sentence, and a bullet whizzed past Tom Bragg's cheek, and went on across the river.

"Curse him!" roared Tom, cocking his carbine.

He wheeled his horse about and dashed ahead a short distance.

He caught sight of a man with a large, broad-brimmed, white hat on his head, and a rifle in his hands. In a moment the gun of the soldier was to his face.

Although his horse was dashing through the woods like the wind, Tom took a deliberate aim and pulled the trigger.

"Crack!" rang out the report of the carbine.

With a yell of pain the rebel bounded into the air and fell to the earth a corpse.

"That's settled one of the cusses," said Tom, spitefully, thrusting another cartridge into his carbine.

The others were riding rapidly through the woods like a party of fox-hunters.

They soon came upon the guerrilla Bragg had shot. The fellow was quite dead, for Tom's bullet had struck him in the small of the back, and gone to his heart.

"There is one less," said Cavalry Jack.

"He'll never draw bead on another man," said Boss Evans.

"No, he won't," Eph Murray said with a laugh that was almost idiotic. Murray was a singular fellow. In fact he was regarded as insane. No one knew where he came from, save that it was from Missouri, and he had mentioned Chariton County as his home.

He was a daring fellow, and very wily, always obeyed his officers, and was a first-class soldier, but he was certainly not of sound mind. The boys all said that what little sense he had was all fighting sense, and he certainly showed them to be correct.

"It serves 'em right," said Jim Jenkins. "Shoot 'em down like wolves, and you will not be bothered with 'em."

"Well, fall in and come on," said Cavalry Jack. "We have no time to look after that fellow now. His friends will attend to him beyond a doubt. Look sharp for more of them, boys. They will no doubt attend to some of us too."

They wheeled into line, and by a fours right march galloped away.

The first file rode some distance in advance of the others and sent two men of that file several rods in advance of them.

They galloped in a southern direction toward the head of Bayou Pierre. The country here became lower, and before night they felt assured they would reach the swamps which had become the haunts of the guerrillas.

"We must feed our horses somewhere to-night, boys," said Jack, "and I have come to the conclusion, that Old Sam Johnson's would be as good a place as any. He is a stanch old rebel, and will regret just as much as any other man to help put down the rebellion."

"He's the man," cried Ben Moore.

"The very man," said Tom Bragg.

"Feed off him by all means," cried Boss Evans. "I remember being on a scout out here and coming to his

great plantation. Curse him, he like to have took us all in that time."

"The old rascal always has half a dozen rough swamp scouts around him."

The sun was down when the squad drew rein in front of the large plantation-house of the rebel.

They found him at home, and looking dark and furious as a thunder-storm on the blue-coats which gathered in his front yard.

"Mr. Johnson," said Jack, "we come here for our suppers, and to get our horses fed."

"What did ye do it foh? Ye know I want nothin' to do wi' sich as ye ar'."

"We come here because we were hungry. I merely stopped here to tell you. We are going to feed our horses and get our suppers anyway, and thought we would have enough respect for you to inform you."

The Southerner fell into a fit of swearing which was terrible to hear.

Jack paid no attention to him, but went with his men to the barn. It was now almost dark. He ordered a negro woman to get their suppers, and she grinned with delight at the prospect of helping Marse Linkun's soldiers.

"Say, marse," said a colored boy who came up into the yard from the darkness, "dere am some rebels now at de barn gittin' co'n for der hosses."

"How many?" Jack asked.

"Dunno, marse; seems to be a duzzen or two."

"All right; we will divide feed with them."

Jack, with five of his men whom he had posted, went to the corn-bin for corn. They heard some men talking on the other side. They were taking out corn from a crack in the crib.

"Tha' Dave, yo got nuff foh yo hoss, I guess," said one.

"All right, Joe, come on."

"We will."

"Now, boys, help yourselves," said Jack, in a loud voice, cocking his revolvers, for he held one in each hand.

"Who the de'il is that?" said one of the rebels.

"Who ar' yo?" asked one.

"We b'lang to you'ns," said Jack.

"What rigment?"

"We mean you'ns belong to we'uns," cried Jack, running round a corner of the stable, with pistol cocked in each hand. "Surrender," he cried.

"Not much, ha, ha, ha, take that."

"Crack."

Jack had exposed his hat but not his head, and it was well he did not, for a bullet pierced his hat through and through.

"You are very clever for a rebel, but I must say you are a rather poor marksman."

Jack raised his revolver.

"Crack!" sharp and keen rang out the report, and the rebel sank down by the side of the corn crib.

"Crack!"

"Crack!" came two more shots, the bullets whistling near Jack's head.

"Two of you pull out corn enough for the horses," said Jack. "They must eat while this fun is going on."

CHAPTER IV.

A SINGLE COMBAT.

THE shooting about the corn crib became quite sharp. There were a dozen at least, of the guerrillas, who started up from the fence corners, woods, and behind stumps and trees.

The other soldiers left the house, and with carbines came running up to where the firing was getting quite hot.

"Feed the horses," said Jack, "they must be eating while we fight."

Four men were detailed to feed the horses, and Jack, with the other eight, continued the fight.

"Ouch, thaunder!" cried Eph Murry, who was loading his rifle at one corner of the stable.

"What's the matter, Eph?" asked Boss Evans.

"An infernal bullet has knocked some dirt in my eye."

"Never mind that."

"But I can't see."

"Shoot the man who did it."

"How the thunder can a fellow shoot when he's got his eyes full o' dirt?"

"I'll shoot for you."

"All right," said Eph; "do you shoot, and I'll stand here and cuss."

Three or four of the guerrillas were shot down and the others driven from the crib. Jack's men had not been injured beyond a few trifling scratches.

Supper was prepared and eaten, and the horses having finished theirs, Jack thought it time to be going.

"There are three or four men at the back of your stable who are badly hurt," said Jack to the Southern planter. "It would be an act of human kindness to bring them in and care for them."

"This is impudence—impudence to an extremel!" cried the irate planter. "You come here and steal my corn, make my servants feed you, shoot down my neighbors like they were dogs, and then tell me it would be an act of human charity to take care of them."

"Why, old gent, don't get huffy," said bluff old Ben Moore; "your blessed neighbors were doing their very best to kill us. They were shooting their blesseddest at us, and we stayed by 'em like brothers, that was all."

"Never mind, Ben," said Jack, "there is no need to make Mr. Johnson any worse than he is. We can assure him we will not hesitate to kill every one of his neighbors whom we find prowling 'round, bushwhacking our men."

The moon was now up, and the horses saddled and bridled, brought to the front gate.

Some of the men lighted their pipes, and some hunted out fresh provisions. The yard was filled with soldiers, and the moon's rays fell upon the glittering carbines.

"Young man," said a voice at the side of Ben Moore, and he felt a hand grasp his wrist with a nervous thrill.

Turning, he saw an old negro woman standing by his side, her large, black eyes blazing with an unnatural light.

"Yo' time has come, yo' days am numbered."

"What do ye mean, aunty?" Ben Moore asked, fixing his eyes upon hers.

"Don't ye see dat broad-faced moon, honey?" she asked, pointing one black, skinny hand at the moon.

"Yes, to be sure I do."

"Well, can't ye read de signs in dem dah specks on it? Can't ye see de brush am burnin' higher and higher an' de smoke goes up'ard, an' can't ye read de signs, chile?"

"I must confess, old auntie, that I cannot."

"Den I'll tell ye, chile. Repent, foh de kingdom am come. Yo' time hab come, an' dar be blood dar foh you. You's goin' to die, an' dat soon, an' dar's blood foh you, dah's blood foh you."

"Don' mind her, massa," said a negro girl. "She's crazy. We calls her Crazy Jane."

"How long has she been crazy?" asked Ben.

"Ebber since de oberseer hit her ober de head wid a hoe."

"Poor thing."

"Prepare to mount," cried Jack.

There was no time for any more comment.

Every soldier sprang to his horse, brought him into line, and thrust the left foot into the stirrup.

"Mount!"

In a moment the men were in the saddle. Reining their horses into a line, they started at a fours right march, breaking into fours, down a great broad road.

Jack was riding in front, his revolver in his hand, when a form suddenly sprang out of the woods and confronted him.

"Stop, massa, fore God stop a minit."

"What is the matter?" Jack asked, reining in his horse, for he saw that the person before them was a negro boy about sixteen or seventeen years of age. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I'se Pomp, massa, an' fore God sake doan go down dis road!"

"Why, Pomp?"

"'Cos, massa, dar am five hundred rebels, dem guerrilla fellers waitin' down heah in de woods, not moah dan a mile, to kill ye."

"Are you sure of what you say, Pomp?" Jack asked. "Are you sure that is true?"

"Oh, bless God, massa, dis chile seed um wid him own eyes. He knows dey am dah to a certainty. Doan ye doubt it."

"Well, Pomp, where shall we go to find a place where we can sleep until morning? We don't care very much about those fellows if we can only meet them by daylight."

"Jess come wid me, all of ye, massa. I'll take ye whah ye kin sleep soun' until morning."

They knew the negro was their friend. There was not one negro in a thousand who was friendly to the Southern cause, and you could count on nearly every one you saw aiding Union soldiers if he could do so without being harmed by any one.

The negro led them away through a very narrow path with a dense forest on either side. The night was most intensely dark, and they were forced to depend more upon the instinct of their horses than upon their own eyesight.

Each soldier held a cocked pistol in his right hand, and the rein grasped firmly in his left. The negro led Jack's horse by the bit, and the others followed.

They proceeded in this way about two miles, when they came to an old cabin which had been deserted so long ago

that the bushes and trees grew up even about the very door.

"Heah, massa, you'll not be cotched afore mornin'," the negro whispered. "Bettah keep yer eyes open, do, 'cos de rebels am mighty thick hereabouts."

The night passed without any other event than one or two false alarms. The soldiers having had a better supper and sleeping more than usual were considerably refreshed when morning came.

They allowed their horses to graze for a short time on the grass which grew in front of the house and all through the broad-leaved forest.

Then they mounted once more, and started in the direction they had been informed the guerrillas were waiting for them.

The soldiers were constantly on the alert. The enemy were in the woods they knew in full force, and they might be expected any moment to run into an ambushade.

While riding along through a somewhat open road where there was but little underbrush, Jack saw a score of horsemen just coming over the hill.

"Deploy," he cried.

The cavalymen instantly began to fall into line five or six rods apart.

The rebels had discovered them, and

"Crack—crack—crack," came rifle and pistol-shots from them. The bullets whistled through the air and struck the trees near our friends, making the young and tender bark fly in the air.

"Steady—forward—steady," commanded Jack.

"Crack," came a pistol-shot in front, and the bullet passed through the crown of his hat.

"Crack," went a shot from Jack's pistol, and the guerrilla fell, pierced through the heart by a bullet.

Though the guerrillas outnumbered Jack's small squad four to one, the daring fellows shouted and cheered, and pressed boldly on up the hill driving them back.

"Charge," cried Jack, holding a fresh pistol in his hand. His gallant squad desired nothing better. They charged with shouts and yells, and the woods presented a lively scene. The rearing of chargers and flashing of arms and pistols, and all the confusion and uproar of a terrific battle.

Jack had selected the captain of the guerrillas, a large, powerful man.

"Now, Selim, my brave steed," cried the young cavalry man, "you must do your best to-day." The noble black horse dashed forward like the wind.

The guerrilla captain was a brave fellow, and fired six times at his antagonist, but owing to his horse shying at each shot he missed his mark.

The guerrilla's horse then became frightened, and in spite of the prodigious strength of his rider, wheeled about and thundered away.

Jack gave chase. At a few bounds the swift-footed Selim was alongside the guerrilla's flying steed.

A panic seized the other guerrillas, and they fled.

The broad sunlight from a cloudless sky descended through the sparse forest trees and revealed Jack seated on his charger, riding at full speed alongside a guerrilla, who was also going at the top of his frightened horse's speed. Jack

raised his revolver and pointed it at the guerrilla's head, crying:

"Surrender!"

"Never."

"Surrender, or I will fire."

"Fire away; I'll never surrender to a Yankee."

"Surrender," said Jack, "I don't want to kill as brave a man as you."

"You kin jist shoot, you little cuss; I'll never surrender to any one."

Jack's finger was on the trigger and he was on the point of pulling it two or three times, but at last he said:

"Is your revolver loaded?"

"No; why don't you shoot?"

"Because I cannot kill an unarmed man;" and Jack reined in Selim. The ambitious animal bounded into the air and tried to break away, but his master held him, while the guerrilla galloped on and disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

MISS JENNIE RUGGLES.

JACK found himself alone in the woods. His men were scattered over different parts of the woods, and the distant ring of shots told that the fight was still going on.

The crashing of brush, shrieks of frightened bushwhackers, and snorts of plunging horses were strong evidence that the fight was still going on.

Jack placed a small silver tube to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

"Oho, cap'en," cried Eph Murry, galloping toward his leader, his smoking revolver in his hand. "We've left a few on 'em scattered about in the woods."

"Yes, Eph, we have sent some of them where they will never fire on another picket again."

"You bet we have."

Next came Charley Hill.

"Did you get any of them, Charley?" Jack asked.

"You bet you now."

"How many?"

"Two."

"Where are they?"

"They are lying in the woods about a mile apart."

One by one the others came in to where Jack stood.

Nearly every man had killed or wounded one or more of the enemy.

They now wheeled their horses into a road and galloped away through the forest for about five miles, when they came upon a small house.

"It's noon, Cap'en Jack," said Tom Bragg.

"Yes, high noon," answered Adelbert Chapman, looking at the sun which was directly above his head.

"We'll stop here and feed," said Jack.

It was a small but neat house, with an orchard near, and a field standing back of it. The house was built of hewn logs fitted together in a neat, workmanlike manner, and white-washed on the outside until it was almost as white as snow.

There was a neat red-brick chimney, and smooth grass-plot for a yard, all surrounded by a fence made of poles laid one upon the other, and lashed together at the ends by

two stakes, one on each side, fastened with hickory withes.

"Helloa," cried Jack.

A dog barked.

"Come out here, quick," cried Jim Jenkins.

But there was no response. The dog did not seem furious.

He was old, lazy, and fat, and seemed to prefer to lie in the sun at the end of the house, to making an attack on any one.

"Let's fire on the house," said Eph Murry, with one of his senseless giggles.

"No, no," said Jack, "do not think of it at all; we can not afford to fire on a house which may contain women and children only."

"Helloa—oa—who—oo—o," cried Eph Murry, yelling like a school-boy.

The door opened, and a lovely young girl, not over seventeen or eighteen years of age, came out.

"Who lives here?" Jack asked.

"No one but mother and I," was the response.

"Who is mother and I?"

"Mary Ruggles, that's mother; and Jennie Ruggles, that's me."

"Where is your father?"

"Dead, sir."

"How long since, Jennie?"

"Since the Stone River battle."

"Was he killed there?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a sadness in the voice of the beautiful girl as she said this, which convinced Jack that she was telling the truth.

"On which side, North or South?"

"South."

"Have you no brothers?"

"But one."

"Where is he?"

"He is with the guerrillas."

"Did ye ever hear the like?" said Boss Evans.

"Let's burn their house," said Tom Bragg.

"Be a good thing," growled Charley Hall.

"Serve 'em just right," growled Dick Beddington.

"You bet you, now," said Charley.

"Hush up, boys," said Jack. "The girl tells us the truth, there can be no doubt of it. We must give her credit for truthfulness and boldness. Had she said her father was killed in our army and her brother was with Sherman, there is no telling how gallant you might all have been."

"Miss Jennie," said Jack, "can you get dinners for us, and is there anything on the place to feed our horses?"

"Yes, sir," said the girl. "There is corn round at the barn, and hay, too, and we can make out to get you some dinner."

"There, boys, see how accommodating," said Adelbert Chapman. "See how accommodating. I'm sweet on her."

"Hush," said Jack. "We want no insulting ladies."

In the meanwhile, the beautiful Jennie stood timid and bashful at the corner of the house, and seemed half-dead with fear.

Jack sprang from the saddle, and approaching the beautiful girl, said:

"Do not be afraid, young lady, you shall not be harmed by these men. I command here, and they are rude but kind-hearted fellows."

The girl seemed assured by this and showed him where the stables were, and told them to put up their horses while she and her mother prepared their dinner.

CHAPTER VI.

TOO MANY IN LOVE.

"Boys," said Ben Moore, "that's a nice girl."

Ben had fed his horse, and not being one detailed to stand guard, was leaning on his short carbine at the door.

"You are mighty right, she is," answered Jenkins. "I am kind er gone on her."

"Boys you must not insult that young lady," said Jack, coming up to them.

"Oh!" growled Boss Evans; "the cap'en's not bullet-proof to them black eyes."

"No rudeness," cried Jack, sternly.

"I ain't rude."

"Change the subject."

"It won't change."

"Think of the guerrillas."

"She's a darned sight pleasanter subject to think on," growled Boss Evans.

"Boys," said Dick Beddington, "I'm dinged ef I don't believe the boys are all gone on that gal."

"Too many in love with one gal is jest sure to raise a disturbance," said John Flynn.

"We didn't come here to fall in love," said Cavalry Jack. "It's quite a different business which brings us out."

"Yes—huntin' them guerrillas," growled Philo Slyter, turning his single eye around the yard.

"I say, Eph," said Jenkins, "hev ye got that dirt out'n yer eye?"

"Yes, I kin see as well as any one," growled Murry.

"We hev hed two pretty warm spots since we started out," said Dick Beddington.

"You bet you now," put in Charley Hill.

"Well," said Dick, "I promised to foller Jack through thick and thin, and he'll find me on hand all the time."

"You bet you now," cried Charley Hill.

At this moment Tom Bragg, who was on picket down the road, came up.

"Jack," said he, "there came a fellow up the road in sight o' the house, and then turned around and galloped away."

"What was he like?"

"A Johnny."

"Why didn't you shoot him?"

"He was too far away."

"We'll have more of them soon, you can depend on it," said Jack, in an uneasy manner. "You keep a good watch on them, and I will go in and hurry up supper."

When Jack entered the kitchen, he found Jennie's mother, a very sullen, grum woman, preparing their suppers, assisted by her beautiful but agitated daughter.

Jack caught the eye of the girl, and in it read that she was troubled.

"We would like to get our suppers as soon as possible," said Jack.

"We can't get it till we kin," snapped the woman.

At this moment Jennie caught his eye and shook her head. A moment later she passed out into another room, and Jack followed her.

"Do not talk with mother," the girl whispered. "She is very bitter, and you cannot hurry her."

"Our only anxiety to hurry up," said Jack, "is the fact that a guerrilla was seen riding down the road, and as soon as he caught sight of us he wheeled about and galloped away."

"Oh, heavens, that was Captain Connel."

"Who is he?"

"The worst guerrilla you ever saw."

"Aha!"

"He was coming here. Oh, I would rather die than fall in his hands."

"Do you think he intended to capture you and carry you away?" asked the astounded Jack.

"Yes."

"Well, he shall not while we are here."

The girl was weeping. Jack could plainly see that hers was no sham, mysterious as her conduct seemed.

"There is something strange about your fear of this man."

"Yes, sir, it must seem strange. If my brother, Tom Ruggles, was here, this scoundrel would not dare come near our house; but Tom is away."

"He is a rebel?"

"Yes, sir, a captain of a company of swamp-rangers."

Jack knew this was only a modest way of saying he was a guerrilla.

"But this Captain Connel is a guerrilla too, is he not?"

"He is."

"Are they enemies?"

"Mortal enemies, though both engaged in one cause, which I believe to be an unholy one. Captain Connel has been annoying me for two years. I have rejected him again and again, and he has threatened to come and carry me away by main force."

"Well, I wish he had come on a while ago. We would have measured strength with him," said Jack, who had come to the conclusion by this time that Miss Ruggles had decidedly too much beauty. "Help your mother hurry up our suppers and we will start off on the hunt of this fellow, and not stop until we have caught him."

"Oh, sir, will you?" cried the beautiful girl, clasping her hands and pressing them tightly together, while she turned her entreating face up to his.

"We will do our best to rid you of your persecutor," said Jack.

"Oh, sir, you have no idea what a load it would be off my heart if he were captured and taken out of the country. Brother Tom would be glad, too. Tom is the soul of honor, if he is a guerrilla."

"I hope, for your sake, Miss Ruggles, that I may not meet your brother Tom."

Jack did not tell her that they took no prisoners

among those guerrillas, but left them in the woods where they found them.

The girl hurried into the kitchen to help her mother get supper, and in a few moments it was smoking on the table.

Jack and six men sat down and ate, while the other six remained on guard.

The last six to eat were Charley Hill, Dick Beddington, Jim Jenkins, Eph Murry, Squire Skaggs, and Boss Evans.

The poor fellows were hungry, and had fallen to with a vengeance, and the thirteen horses were saddled, when "Crack!" went Tom Bragg's carbine.

"Here they come, here they come," cried Tom Bragg, running down the road, his empty gun in his hand, and jumping the yard fence.

"Crack, crack, crack!" rang out three more shots, and two of the advancing guerrillas fell in the road.

"Ding it," cried Murry, "hold 'em level out there 'till I get my dinner."

"Come on, boys," shouted Jack, "there's fifty of them, at least."

A roar of fire-arms shook the house.

"Well, I'm goin' to have suthin' to eat," cried Murry, angrily, stuffing some bread and cakes in his pocket and filling his mouth full of fried bacon.

Jack ranged his men behind the fence, and they opened a brisk fire on the guerrillas, who fell back about a hundred paces, and then with the reins in their teeth and a revolver in each hand charged upon the fence.

A sharp fight ensued. Carbines were emptied and revolvers drawn. The constant report of pistols, yells of combatants and shrieks of wounded filled the air. In the midst of the fight Jack heard a sweet voice at his side say:

"There, there is Captain Connel."

Jack turned and saw Jennie pointing at the rebel who had command, and he fired the two remaining shots at him without effect.

The guerrillas fell back, and Jack then discovered that Ben Moore lay on his face at the gate. He raised his brave comrade, but Ben was dead.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REBEL CAPTAIN.

"Ben is dead, boys," said Cavalry Jack. "He is shot through the heart."

There was a sigh from the breast of each man, and a momentary look of sadness and regret, but not that horror depicted on the faces of the men which always appears at an early acquaintance with death. Those grim old veterans had become used to war and bloodshed and death.

They had grown accustomed to such scenes in the last two years, and when they met death face to face, they never flinched.

"We must bury him," said Jack.

"If we only had something to dig a grave with."

Jack turned about and saw the pale and horrified Jennie standing in front of the door of her house.

"Miss, is there a spade on the farm?" Jack asked.

"Yes, sir, I will get it," she answered. Then going round to the rear of an out-house, she brought a spade which she gave to Jack.

Turning her horrified face to his, she murmured:

"He got away at last?"

"Yes, but never fear, young lady, he shall not always escape us. I know the scoundrel now."

Two of the soldiers carried their dead comrade away into a thick part of the woods, and there they dug a hole four feet deep.

Wrapping poor Ben Moore up in his horse-blanket, they laid him uncoffined, unknelt, and soon to be unknown in the open grave, and heaped the earth upon him. There were parents and friends, a wife and child in far-off Illinois waiting for the soldier's return. But they may wait and wait until the death angel knocks at their door, but never again shall their eyes behold the form of him whom they loved so dearly.

The soldiers who had performed the unceremonious burial were guarded over by their comrades in arms.

Jack now gave the orders to mount, and they were soon in the saddle. Riding back past the house they saw Miss Jennie Ruggles near the gate.

Lying in the upper road were half a dozen guerrillas either dead or badly wounded.

"You might administer to the wants of those fellows," said Jack to the girl.

"We'd better kill 'em and git 'em out o' their misery," said Eph Murry, with a laugh.

"No——"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

A pair of rifle-shots from the woods on the south interrupted Jack's further speech.

"Fours, right about—forward—charge!" cried Jack, and away they went like the wind, carbines in their hands ready to shoot their enemy at sight.

Like a thunderbolt the solid phalanx of soldiers dashed on toward the woods.

Two or three more shots rang out from the woods. Two or three more bullets whizzed near the heads of our friends, who could now hear the guerrillas running.

They only caught sight of one of them, and half a dozen carbines rattled forth a crash of fire and death.

The rebel fell pierced by four heavy leaden balls.

He was dead when the cavalymen passed him, and with yells of triumph they pressed on after those scoundrels still in flight.

Miss Jennie had been a witness to the whole scene of carnage. As if born to rule the storm of war she could almost smile while those deadly missiles were whistling about her ears.

"Jinny, Jinny, wha' ar' you?" her mother called from the house.

"Here, mother."

"Why don't ye come in, come in, heah, an' crawl under the bed."

"No, no, mother."

"Come, chile, or you will git killed."

"The fighting is over, mother."

"Oh, deah, oh, deah—Heaven be praised. I neveh want to see or heah it again."

The old lady had evidently not seen it, for from the

amount of feathers on her head she must have been in rather close proximity to the bed during the fight.

"Mother, there are men badly wounded up the road," said Jennie. "I am going up to see what I can do for them."

"Oh, don't go, chile, don't go."

"Why not, mother?"

"Because you might get killed."

"Oh, mother, they are gone. The fighting is over," and before Mrs. Ruggles could say another word, Jennie had opened the gate and was hurrying up the road as fast as her feet could carry her.

She came to a rebel leaning on his elbow lying under a tree. The blood was streaming from a frightful bullet wound in the face.

"Poor man," said Jennie, kindly; "you are badly hurt."

"I guess I'm done foh, miss. I guess I'm gwine to cross oveh that river what mother used to talk about."

"Can I not help you?"

"Wall, now, miss, ef you'd bring a feller a little cold water to cool his burnin' tongue, ye might be doin' me a favor."

"Water, water," groaned another but a few paces away, and there, sitting on the ground propped up against a tree, lay another man, with a bullet through his body.

Two more were in the road dead, and a dead horse lay between them.

A little farther up the road lay another dead man by the side of a dead horse.

Jennie turned about and ran home for a pitcher of water and a glass. She brought these to the wounded men.

She poured out a goblet of water for the first man she came to, and he drank it eagerly.

Then she hastened to the next, the poor fellow who was shot through the body. Filling the tumbler to the brim, she held it to his pale lips, and wet his grateful eyes.

At this moment the tramp of horses' feet came down the road, and Jennie started up.

"Hello, my angel," cried a familiar voice. "Engaged in a work o' mercy, are ye? Well, I'm glad to see ye so merciful."

She fixed her eyes on the face of the speaker. It was the rebel captain and her enemy, James Connel.

With a cry of terror she dropped the pitcher of water at the side of the wounded man, and fled.

"Oh, we're goin' to foller ye, my dear," cried the guerrilla, and with a score of armed men at his heels he galloped up to the small neat house the girl had just entered.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEPARATION IN THE WOODS.

ALL the remainder of the evening Cavalry Jack chased the guerrillas through a dense forest in the direction of the swamps near the head of Bayou Pierre. Here they lost trace of the enemy, and night was coming on.

"Well, boys, we seem to have got at last where there is no sign of civilization," said Jack.

"Yes," said Tom Bragg, "and I guess our chances for sleeping out of doors all night are pretty tolerable good just now."

"Night is on us, and we can go no further."

"What'll we do for supper?"

"Here is grass for our horses, and we will have to commence on our three days' rations of hard tack and bacon."

No one knows better than a soldier how hard, dry and unpalatable food will become on a scout. Their hard tack was broken into crumbs, and their meat almost spoiled. There was no way to cook their meat, as they dared not make a fire, or make their coffee, and our friends were compelled to eat bacon raw and their fragments of crackers.

"I hope this kind o' fare ain't goin' to last allus," growled Skaggs, munching his hard, dry bread.

"It wouldn't last long with you, Squire, if there was anything near here to steal," said Boss Evans with a chuckle.

"Never you mind, Boss," groaned Skaggs. "There may be a reckonin' some day."

"Well, it'll be hard on you, Squire, when that day comes."

"Oh, no."

"I guess it will."

"Wall, don't make a fuss about it now."

Skaggs knew he was a clever thief, and seemed to pride himself on his proficiency in his profession. Skaggs could have been popular among his comrades had he not been so selfish. He stole whatever he could lay his hands upon, and never divided it with his own mess unless he was forced to do so.

Either fear of punishment or pride kept him from stealing anything from his own company. He never failed, however, to pluck all citizens, whether loyal or disloyal, and when he got a chance even sent goods home to his wife and children.

Skaggs was not very popular among his comrades, and was despised by all the other soldiers. He had but one redeeming quality, and that was his unflinching bravery. With a soldier this covers a multitude of sins.

The soldiers held their horses while they grazed, leaving the saddles on them, and the bridles hanging to the saddles. They then tied them by their halters to trees, thus giving them some little range and grass enough and trees enough to graze and browse on till morning.

Our friends were compelled to converse in low tones during the night, for their enemies were in the woods near about them in considerable numbers.

Jack put four on guard and the others laid down to sleep.

Our young cavalryman had just gone into the land of dreams, and thought himself again at home 'mid peaceful scenes with his parents. Heard birds singing their sweetest songs and the dark war clouds had rolled away.

The distant cannonading at Vicksburg, which had been heard all day, now ceased, and nature, indeed, seemed enjoying a sweet repose.

Suddenly the lion-like voice of Jim Jenkins broke the stillness of the night, and put an end to the cricket's song.

"Halt," he cried, "who goes there?"

In a moment Jack was on his feet, tightening his belt, which he had loosed on lying down.

"Halt, halt—crack."

"Fall in, boys," cried Jack.

Every one was up and under arms now, save Eph Murry, and he slept like a dead man.

"Eph, Eph, wake up!" cried Jack.

"Oh, thunder! let me alone."

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!" came a volley from the dark woods into the camp.

"Eph, wake up."

"Lem' me 'lone, ding ye," cried Murry, who was very hard to wake.

"Get up and fight."

"I'll fight you ef ye don't quit kickin' o' me."

The guards had now fallen back, and Jack's men now formed something like a line in the darkness.

The crack, crack, cracking of rifles and pistols from the woods became incessant, and our friends soon became convinced that they were not only surprised, but attacked by a considerable force.

They loaded and fired as rapidly as they could, and the woods were ablaze with flashing guns.

"Wait, boys, for the flash of their guns, then aim at the spot from whence their shot was fired. Take good aim, and do not miss your man."

A fight in the dark is attended with more uncertainties and more anxieties than any battle by daylight.

The battle had lasted about ten minutes before Eph Murry was aroused and got in line.

Then he rubbed his eyes, yawned and swore he would make some one smoke for disturbing his nap.

The bullets were whistling like hail about his head, but he seemed not to regard them in the least.

Squire Skaggs fell dead at his side, and then Eph began to shoot and curse. The Squire was his brother-in-law, and Eph fought like a madman.

The rebel guerrillas pressed in nearer and nearer, and all night long the fight raged.

Jim Jenkins was killed and Boss Evans dying with a mortal wound at daylight.

Though Cavalry Jack and his men had fought like tigers, they could not withstand such a force. At daylight the heavens and earth seemed to speak with rebel yells, and there was a tremendous rush on them from every side.

"To horse! to horse!" cried Jack. "We must cut our way through."

In the hurry and confusion Beddington wounded Jack's horse, and Jack mounted Boss Evans's.

Eph Murry was trying to mount when a bullet crashed through his brain, and he fell back upon the blood-stained sod, dead.

Our friends drew their revolvers and poured such a galling fire on their enemies, that they, though outnumbering them twenty to one, fell back, leaving a dozen dead or mortally wounded.

"Now cut through," cried Jack.

The guerrillas rallied and charged once more.

Jack's little band of heroes met them with a counter charge. Jim Jenkins fell never to rise again, and our little band, breaking through the enemy's lines, separated and scattered in every direction.

CHAPTER IX.

TREED BY BLOOD-HOUNDS.

CAVALRY JACK was closely pursued by at least a score of rebel guerrillas.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!" came carbine shots behind him, and the bullets whistled spitefully through the air among the bushes, and clipped the leaves and smaller twigs from the trees.

Jack maintained his presence of mind, and retained his last revolver for closer quarters.

"Press on him, boys," shouted a voice which seemed familiar to our young light-horseman. Looking round he discovered the very man he had chased two days before, and whom he could have killed without the least trouble. "We are running him into the swamp, and we'll get him yit."

"Crack."

A bullet passed through the rim of Jack's hat.

"Ah, that I was only mounted on my own beautiful, swift-footed Selim, then I could bid defiance to them all," cried Jack.

Crack!

Crack!

"I hit him," cried one of the rebels, "didn't ye see him scrooch at that shot o' mine?"

"No, you didn't," said the rebel leader.

"Yes, I did. Now you'll see he'll fall."

Crack!

"There, didn't you see him juke?"

"No, he is not touched, and you can't hit him at that distance."

Jack turned around in his saddle, and though thundering over fallen logs, and through thick forest at full speed, he brought his pistol up and fired.

The man who had been so certain he had hit the Yankee, gave utterance to a fearful yell, and fell headlong from his horse to the ground.

"That ends him," said Jack.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack! came four shots on his right.

A bullet inflicted a slight wound on the left corner of his forehead, and for a moment stunning him. The horse he was riding gave utterance to a scream, which only a terrified or badly injured horse can, and plunged through the woods at a most unnatural speed.

Jack was confused and stunned for some little time, and it is a great wonder he did not fall from his saddle, but strange to say he maintained his position manfully, and when he came to himself, he saw the blood streaming from the side of his horse, who was splashing blindly through the muddy swamp.

"He is mortally wounded," said Jack, "and I must try it on foot."

The horse was already unmanageable, and splashing and struggling blindly, madly onward.

Jack tried to rein him in, but found it an impossibility. The horse struggled madly on. Then loosening his feet from his stirrups, he sprang into the mud. The water

splashed all over him, and he found that it came half-way up to his boots.

"They cannot track me," he said to himself, and bounded away upon a little knoll. There were little knolls or tufts of grass all along through the swamp, at convenient stepping distances, and he sprang from one to the other with wonderful rapidity.

In the meanwhile his wounded, maddened horse was struggling, plunging, floundering onward through the mud, water and willow bushes, more like a crippled deer than a horse.

"He will take them the farther from me," thought Jack to himself, as he bounded away from tuft to knoll, from knoll to log, going every step further and further into the swamps.

At last he came to a dense cane-brake. The tall cane grew so thick that he could hardly crowd himself through it. He pressed into it carefully, knowing that sometimes furious wild animals inhabited these places.

Jack paused to listen when he had gone about a hundred yards in the woods.

Soon he heard splashing of horses' feet in the muddy water.

"I know he's in heah somewhere, cap'en," said the voice of a Southerner. "He came out this way."

"But we could have seen him," said the guerrilla captain, "if he had crossed the bayou."

"Don' know, cap'en, them bushes ar' very thick."

"Yes, but some of the boys would have got him."

Jack recognized the voice of the captain as the man whose life he had spared a day or two before. Then Jack surmised the exact truth about it, and that was that the guerrilla captain was not anxious to find him, or that any of his men should.

Wild shouts rose on the air a mile further east.

"What does that mean?" cried the guerrilla captain. Suddenly confused shouts came back, that, "He was there, he was there." And then they galloped away as fast as they could through the mud, water, and swamps.

"It may be some of my poor boys whom they have run down," said Jack.

He remembered that he could do them no good, and consequently hurried away as fast as he could in another direction.

It was now high noon and Jack was hungry. His haversack of provisions he had lost in the battle of the night and flight of the morning, so he was forced to do without food.

The dark lagoons which he passed had only snakes and frogs in them, or perhaps a homely mud-turtle resting on the bank, which plunged beneath the waters the moment it saw him.

Jack paused frequently to rest in his wanderings, then after waiting but a few moments, would hasten on again to the deep unknown recesses of the forest and swamp.

During one of these pauses he heard something more terrible to him than the deep thunder of those cannons at Vicksburg. It was the baying of blood-hounds.

Loud, deep, fierce, and strong the sound came on his ears, and grew nearer and nearer every moment. Pursued by blood-hounds! Oh, how he ran, putting forth all his

strength in the flight. On, on, and on he sped. But they were gaining on him. One caught sight of him through the woods, and came bounding forward.

Jack finding escape was impossible, sprang quickly up a tree and seated himself among its branches.

CHAPTER X.

MISS JENNIE CAPTURED.

"JIM CONNEL what d'ye want here?" demanded Mrs. Ruggles, meeting that guerrilla at the gate where he came with his bull-dogs at his heels as we have seen in chapter seven.

"I want yer darter, old lady," answered Connel, with a loud haw-haw, which was heartily responded to by corresponding haw-haws from his men.

"Jim Connel, don't ye come inside o' my house."

"Why Misses Ruggles."

"Because you are a sneak thief."

"Hey-dey, now, ain't I fur Jeff Davis an' the Southern Confederacy?"

"No, you an' all yer cowardly gang are jest fur stealin' everything ye kin lay yer hands on. If my son Tom was here he wouldn't let ye show yer head inside o' our fence."

"I don't care a cent for you or yer son Tom, either," said the guerrilla, dismounting from his horse.

"Ye don't?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, now, we'll see. I'll tell Tom next time he comes how you insulted his old mother, and that he must tend to ye."

The guerrilla fastened his horse to the gate-post, and laid his hand on the gate. Mrs. Ruggles had seized a stick, and now brought it whack upon the hand of the scoundrel which rested on the gate.

"Ouch h—!" roared the guerrilla. "You old mother o' Satan, you'll pay for that," cried the infuriated outlaw, drawing his pistol. He cocked it, and leveled it at the old white-haired woman.

Mrs. Ruggles, who had been a coward during the fight between the Union soldiers and guerrillas, was brave as a lion when defending her child.

"You old witch, I'll kill you!" the enraged guerrilla cried.

But she looked straight into the muzzle of that pistol, and never flinched.

"Ain't you afraid of me?" he asked.

"N-a-no," she answered with a sneer; "who's a gwine to be afraid o' you, I'd like mighty well to know? Ye impudent, contemptible, low-lived hound; who's afeared o' you?"

"But I can shoot you."

"Yes, but ye can't shoot Yankees. I'll tell ye what ye kin do to 'em, though; ye kin run from 'em as fast as yer horse'll tote ye off."

The guerrilla felt all this the most keenly, especially as his men laughed, and huzzahed, and hooted at the apt retort of the old lady.

He swore and stamped around in his rage.

"I'd put up that pistol, cap," said his lieutenant, whom he did not like very well, "and fight the old woman a fair square fight."

"Yes, or let the coward give me one, an' I'll put a hole through his head in no time."

With an oath Captain Connel put his pistol in his belt, and drew his sword.

"Meet him, old woman, with yer club, yer a good match fur him."

The old woman again struck him, this time on the shoulder. By a sweeping cut with his sword he knocked the stick from her hand.

"Ha, ha, ha, now, you mother of Satan! try me, will you," roared the victorious guerrilla.

Mrs. Ruggles stood for a moment confused and almost out of breath. She had not been hurt by the slashing blow from the guerrilla's sword.

The guerrilla captain ran up to the front door with his sword in his hand.

But Miss Jennie herself met him at the door with a fire-shovel in her hand. She struck at him, and there was a clash as the iron shovel struck against the blade of his saber.

"Aha! You've got it there," cried the lieutenant.

The captain swore a few fearful oaths, and continued to parry the right and left-handed blows rained upon him by the daring girl.

Mrs. Ruggles now recovered her stick and fell upon the scoundrel in the rear, giving him several severe whacks before he could prepare himself for defense.

"Come here, some o' ye," thundered the guerrilla. "Come on, or cuss me ef I don't hev to kill some o' these jades."

Two or three of the guerrillas sprang from their horses.

"Run, Jinny, run fur yer life," cried the mother.

The girl hurled the fire-shovel against the head of Captain Connel with such force as to knock him down, and then fled as swiftly as she could go.

"Hold on, my little darlin'," said one of the soldiers, who was pursuing her.

She ran the faster.

"Hold on." Down through the open garden gate she fled and on, on, through the garden into the orchard and through it as fast as her little feet could carry her. She could hear the heavy tramp of feet in her rear, and these only tended to accelerate her speed.

"Oho, now I have you, my darling," cried the villain, leaping forward and seizing her by the shoulder.

He held her back, and though she wept and implored him to let her go, he held her fast.

Poor Jennie Ruggles, overcome with fear and excitement, swooned away. The guerrilla raised her in his arms and carried her to the house, where the mother had already been bound fast to the bed.

"What, she fainted!" cried Captain Connel. Well, so much the better. Hand her to me, Ike, when I have mounted my horse, and we will go to the swamps."

In a few moments the captured girl was upon a horse before Captain Connel, speeding away like the wind. That night he was frightened from his intended course by a fight between Cavalry Jack and the large body of rebels. The villain feared to meet either party, so he waited until daylight, and then with three trusty men started away toward the swamps.

CHAPTER XI.

RESCUING THE GIRL.

THE branches of the tree in which Cavalry Jack had

seated himself were very low. The dogs came with loud deafening bays and bounded up in the air at him. They could touch his boot heels, and he administered some hearty kicks upon their noses. There were three of them, and they were the most ferocious, furious monsters he had ever seen.

Jack had his carbine at his back and his revolvers at his belt. He could easily have shot the dogs, but he knew that a shot would bring his enemies down upon him, so he refrained from shooting.

The young cavalryman drew his saber, the point of which was as keen as a needle. He waited until one of the furious beasts made a leap in the air at his feet, and then grasping the limb on which he sat with his left hand to steady himself, he made a downward thrust with all the force his good right arm possessed.

The sword point entered the dog's mouth, plunged down his throat into his body and pierced his heart. The dog fell back a quivering mass. His companion seemed more infuriated than ever.

A second one leaped in the air at him, and he drove the point of his sword through its neck. The dog fell back dead, but the saber stuck in the wound so tightly that Jack was jerked out of the tree and fell upon the ground.

The third blood-hound, appalled at the fate of its companion, paused a moment and fixed its fierce, blood-red eyes upon our hero.

Jack jerked his sword from the body of the dead hound, and turned upon the living foe. As the hound sprang upon him he seized it by the throat, hurled it upon the ground and pinned it down with his sword.

The young cavalryman paused from his laborious conflict, and wiped the perspiration from his brow. It was not far to a lagoon where he dragged the dogs and plunged them beneath the water, hoping that their owners would not find them and be at fault as to their fate.

Jack climbed up the banks of the creek to resume his flight, when a voice cried out:

"Halt!"

He turned his eyes upward, and there standing beneath a tree was a guerrilla, covering him with a revolver. In a moment Jack's pistol was raised to his eye.

"Hold," said the guerrilla, lowering the muzzle of his weapon a very little bit, "we have met before."

Jack now recognized the man before him as the guerrilla whom he had met before, and whose life he once spared.

"Well, sir, what do you propose?" said Cavalry Jack.

"I will spare your life, as you once did mine. You can go, now, for I am in pursuit of a villain in my own ranks."

"Who?" asked Jack.

"One Jim Connel."

"Jim Connel?" cried our hero, as if he had heard the name before.

"Yes, he abducted my sister, and the fiend has her now in the swamps."

"Stay, sir, was your sister's name Jennie Ruggles?"

"Yes; do you know her?"

"And you are Tom Ruggles?"

"I am," the astounded guerrilla answered.

"Then, sir, allow me to volunteer my services to aid in

rescuing your sister," said Jack, going forward and grasping the hand of his generous enemy.

He explained in as few words as possible how he had met the guerrilla's sister, and of the fight at the Ruggles' homestead.

In return, Tom related how he had accidentally come on Captain Connel with three men and his captive sister. How he had pursued them, when they fired on him, killing his horse, and that he was now pursuing them on foot.

"Have you any idea where we will find them?" Jack asked.

"Yes, there is a hut in the swamp which Connel thinks I know nothing about. Without doubt we will find them there."

"How far is it?"

"About seven miles."

"Then we can reach it in two hours?"

"You mistake. A seven miles' march through these swamps is no small matter. If we get there in four we will do well."

"That will take us until night?"

"Yes, beyond a doubt."

"I want to ask you a question."

"Well, what is it?" the guerrilla officer said.

"Were you not with the rebels who attacked us last night?"

"Yes, I commanded them, and must say you fought more like devils than human beings."

"Your own men could not be complimented too highly for their bravery," said Jack. "They were certainly tigers."

"Where are the remainder of your gallant squad?"

"Either killed or scattered in the swamps, hunted by blood-hounds."

"I swear I never turned any hounds loose nor would I permit it, if it could have been helped," said Tom Ruggles.

"I believe you," said Jack, for he remembered that Captain Ruggles seemed to desire to draw the enemy away from his hiding-place in the cane brake.

They traveled on, on, and on, through the swamp—some places compelled to wade through water over their boot-tops, and at other places the ground was high and dry enough for them to walk without difficulty.

The sun had gone down and darkness came on, with it the fogs, which invariably hover over these swamps, arose before the hut was in sight.

"They are there," said Captain Ruggles, for his quick eye caught, at the same instant Jack did, the light in the cabin.

Drawing their pistols, Ruggles and Cavalry Jack crept up to the hut.

It had large cracks through which the light of a single tallow-candle streamed, and on the inside of the hut they saw four men with the captive maiden.

"Now, miss," said Captain Connel, "ye needn't go to puttin' on any airs here, 'cos I've got you and ain't a-gwine to let ye go. Yer brother's flounderin' in the swamp, an' that Yankee lover o' yours hez his throat cut."

Crash! the door came open.

"You are a liar!" roared Tom Ruggles, bounding in at

the door with Cavalry Jack at his side, both having a pistol in each hand.

"Surrender," cried Jack, "and touch not that girl, you nefarious scoundrel."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"CRACK!"

The bullet grazed Jack's cheek. This was but the signal for the onset.

"Don't spare one of the infernal scoundrels," cried Captain Ruggles.

"Crack!"

"Crack!" went the pistols of Jack and Captain Connel, both fired so near at the same time that they almost blended.

The bullet of Connel grazed Jack's temple, and for the moment so confused and stunned him that he could hardly stand.

His shot had struck Connel in the forehead, and he fell dead to the floor.

In the meanwhile Captain Ruggles was not idle. He had fired several shots at the three other guerrillas, and one fell.

The constant crack, crack, cracking of pistols rang out on the night air, and the room was so filled with sulphurous smoke that the combatants could not see each other. They waited for the smoke to clear away, with that deadly determination which marks the peculiarly dangerous characteristics of combatants.

The smoke was wafted away, and one of the guerrillas was seen squatted in a corner holding his pistol ready cocked, and the other behind a chair, the only shelter he could find.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

Once more the air was filled with deafening shots, and the room with smoke.

Cavalry Jack shot the man behind the chair through the head, and Captain Ruggles killed the one in the corner.

Miss Jennie was unharmed, save her terrible fright and long exhausting ride. She was very anxious, however, to return home; but they dare not attempt to return until morning.

They left the four dead rebels in the old hut, and mounting three of the horses permitted the other to follow.

All day long they waded the swamps without food, and at night encamped on what seemed a small island in the marshes, subsisting on some wild berries.

The next morning they reached the upland, and came upon a small squad of Union cavalry.

To Jack's joy and surprise, he found them the remnant of his own brave band. There was Tom Bragg, John Flynn, Celeste Chamberlain, Adelbert Chapman, Dick Beddington and Charley Hill. Five of the seven were wounded, but none of them seriously.

Captain Ruggles seemed a little uneasy in the company of so many blue coats, until Jack assured him that he should be free. They reached the home of Jennie, and she was restored to her mother. The Confederate and Federal soldiers dined together that day.

When they separated Jack lingered long at the gate, bidding Miss Jennie farewell, and promising to see her again when this cruel war is over.

Tom Ruggles assured Jack that their pickets should not be fired on any more by the guerrillas, and with the remnant of his men he returned to his camp, where they were making arrangements for the siege. We must mention the fact in conclusion that Jack got his charger Selim, and that Ruggles kept his word, and no more pickets were shot by his guerrillas.

[THE END.]



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